

Stamford Street Railroad:
Trolley Barn & Office Building
35 Station Place
Stamford,
Fairfield County,
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-10

HAER
CONN,
1- STAMF,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: 35 Station Place
Stamford, Fairfield County
Connecticut

Dates of Construction: 1902-03; altered 1924

Present Owner: State of Connecticut
Department of Transportation
24 Wolcott Hill Road
Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109

Present Use: Bus garage and transit company offices, scheduled for
demolition (1984) and replacement by an intermodal
transit facility.

Significance: The buildings are physical remnants of Stamford's
trolley system.

Historian: Janice G. Artemel with assistance of Kristin Heinz.

NOTE: See HAER No. CT-9 for information on the New York, New
Haven & Hartford Railroad: Stamford Station, which
was related to this site and located on adjacent
property.

INTRODUCTION

The Stamford Station, in conjunction with the Stamford Street Railroad, Trolley Barn and Office Building represent a transportation-related district in existence since the 19th century. These structures reflect the technology and function of their time. Although they are to be demolished, the transportation function will continue at this location with the anticipated construction of a new train station with a new intermodal transfer facility adjacent to the facility.

STAMFORD STATION

Stamford Railroad Station in Stamford, Connecticut (Figure 1) was built by the New York Division of the New York, New Haven & Hartford (NY,NH&H) Railroad in 1896¹ as a passenger station on the new four-track mainline (Photo 1). The NY,NH&H Railroad began an expansion program in the late 19th century which included the elimination of grade crossings between Woodlawn Junction and New Haven² and construction of new passenger stations. The Stamford Station was one of these new stations.

The architect of the station has not been identified, but there seems to have been a standard design utilized with minor variations at several other NY,NH&H line station depots, such as at Port Chester, Mamaroneck and New Rochelle, NY, and at South Norwalk and Westport, Connecticut.³ William A. Thomas of Rye, New York was the builder of the twin Stamford Stations for a total cost of \$31,400.⁴ The design and layout conforms to design specifications⁵ in use at the time and those recommended by the American Railroad Engineering Association.⁶

In October 1907 Stamford became the terminus for the first U.S. mainline electrically-operated passenger train service when the NY,NH&H Railroad was electrified between Woodlawn, New York and this point.⁷ Steam locomotives were attached to all trains going east beyond Stamford. This designation as a terminus was important to the economic growth of Stamford as a regional center in southwestern Connecticut. The superior commuting service of the electrified line was cited in 1929 as directly contributing to a doubling of Stamford's population between 1905 and 1925, and a trebling of the number of commuters using the Stamford Station.⁸ Even when electrification was completed beyond Stamford to New Haven in 1910,⁹ the station remained a terminus of the electrically operated suburban train service from New York City. It continues to serve today as an important stop for both Metronorth suburban and Amtrak intercity service (Photo 2).

A noteworthy feature of the station is the location of comparable station functions in a pair of nearly identical buildings on opposite sides of the tracks (Figure 2); the south side is for

eastbound (New Haven) traffic; the north side is for westbound (New York) traffic (Photo 3). One low-level platform served passengers in each direction. Each building was capable of independent operation, including ticket sales. The buildings are sited in an offset relationship and linked by a subway passageway located between the near ends of the buildings. The subway is accessible only from stairways outside the buildings.

While it was not unusual for a railroad to provide buildings on both sides of the tracks, it was unusual to provide full passenger services in each of those structures.¹⁰ Almost always, the direction with the least originating patronage had a smaller structure than the other direction; the larger building usually contained all the main functional spaces such as the ticket office, baggage and express rooms, toilets and main waiting space while the smaller contained only a secondary waiting space. It may be assumed that two comparable buildings were built at Stamford at that time because originating traffic was, or anticipated to be, of the same magnitude in both directions.

The station consists of two rectangular brick buildings with hipped roofs (Photo 4). Two brick beltcourses circle the building; one along the spring line of the arches of the first floor masonry arches, and a second along the sill line of the segmental windows (Photo 5).

Each building contains a symmetrical waiting room extending from the street side to the track side. Circulation from the waiting room to trains is through doors near the ends of the longitudinal sides of the space (Photo 6). Between the doors, on the track side is an enclosed ticket office built within the volume of the waiting room.

On the track side of the ticket office is a projecting window bay. This bay is a typical feature of small railroad stations and served to provide a line of sight along the tracks in each direction. It also usually contained a telegraph station for the announcement of train arrivals and departures. A pedimented gable is located directly above the projecting bay (Photo 7).

Each building had toilets and baggage rooms flanking the waiting rooms. Space was also provided for train operations, with trainmen's bunkrooms, lockers and police centers in adjacent rooms. Each building also contains a second floor, although the segmental windows on the exterior are easily mistaken for clerestory windows. The second floor was used for office and storage space.

The major interior materials in the waiting rooms are wood and glazed brick (Photo 8). There is red oak wainscoting surrounding the room with vertical beaded paneling and fenestration trim. The upper walls are of white glazed brick. Both the headed

ceilings and cornice are North Carolina pine. The ticket office is entirely of wood with a wainscott similar to the other walls, and with upper walls of shallow recessed panels. All interior woodwork has been painted a creme color; originally it was stained or naturally finished. The floor surface in the north building is an unusual multicolored, large aggregate terrazzo.

The building exterior is yellow brick with red sandstone base and red sandstone window sills. The cornice and window frames are wood. The buildings were originally unpainted, but now are painted a light green color. The original plans show a slate roof; however, the hip roof was covered with yellow asbestos shingles. The ridge and hipcaps are red terracotta, while the chimneys, also painted, are of red brick (Photos 9, 10, 11).

The most important change which has occurred at Stamford Station is not physical, but functional. Today there is heavy train travel between Stamford and New York with only minimal traffic toward New Haven and Boston. However, the commuter traffic is as important today as it was to the city in 1925 at the time of the Swan Report.¹¹

The original low platforms and canopies were replaced with new high level platforms and canopies in 1972 and 1973. The high platforms have been built across the track side of each building at about sill level (Photo 12). There were canopies above the main entrance doors along the belt course and below the lunette windows. These were in use as late as 1926.¹²

On all but the street elevations the original cornice of both buildings has been replaced with an extended eave and the second floor windows covered with plywood panels. A brick addition in the street elevation of the eastbound (north side) building, used as a bank branch office, has replaced the three central windows in that facade. Otherwise the exterior walls are intact.

The interior of the north building has been altered by the addition of new concessions, particularly a newstand and lunch counter into the space formerly used as a trainmen's rest area. Other concessions include a branch bank and shoeshine stand.

The interior of the south building remains almost identical to the original plan (Photos 13, 14, and 15). The structure was used as a bus depot from 1945 to 1973 by the Greyhound, Trailways and the Connecticut Bus Companies. It is now closed to the public, and is used for storage and offices.

STAMFORD STREET RAILROAD COMPANY
TROLLEY BARNS AND OFFICE BUILDING

The Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Barn was constructed in 1902-1903 to replace the original carbarn built in 1886 which was located on Liberty Place (Woodside Street). The original building collapsed during a windstorm in 1910, by which time the new barn had been in use several years.¹³

The barn is a two-and-a-half story brick structure with minimal detail (Photo 16). The pitched roof is capped with a monitor. The east and west facades have segmental arched windows set in bays separated by brick pilasters. The north and south facades sport round gable windows surrounded by a decorative brick pattern.

The original repair shop was located to the east of the main building, set back from the north facade, adjoining the car barn.¹⁴ It is presently used for bus repair (Photo 17).

An addition to the west facade of the barn was constructed in 1924 to accommodate buses. The structures served both trolley and bus functions until November 1933 when trolley service was discontinued. At that time the Connecticut Transit Company acquired the original trolley structure to house its buses,¹⁵ and for all practical purposes abandoned the structure to the west (Photo 18).

The barn was altered again after World War II when the lintel was lowered, the spandrel bricked in, and the doors were revamped to accommodate aluminum overhead garage doors. The inspection pits in the barn floor were covered over at the same time. The original truss work was not altered and remains today as originally built (Photos 19 and 20).

The Trolley Barn is presently used to garage Connecticut Transit buses and the Trolley Office Building is used for Connecticut Transit offices. The former west addition is now occupied by Johnson Glass offices.

The two-and-a-half story Trolley Office Building stands northwest of the barn. The granite sills of the trabeated windows have been painted white as has the trim of the lunette window in the north facade and the cornice. A transit company dispatcher's office and operator's lobby occupy the first floor while offices occupy the second floor.

The Trolley Barn and Trolley Office Building possess historical significance as a physical remnant of Connecticut's trolley heritage. They retain their transportation function, although trolleys no longer serve the local residents. Most other remaining trolley barns in Connecticut no longer continue a transportation function.

Both structures retain much of their architectural integrity, although the car barns have been altered significantly in the entrance bays to accommodate buses.

CONCLUSION

The four structures, all built within six years of each other, were designed to serve the expanding transportation needs of coastal Connecticut and New York. All are functional buildings with minimal architectural embellishment. Their design reflects the needs of the passenger, but also accommodates the needs of those working at the facilities.

Although it was decided to demolish all four buildings to create space for the new station and garage, this documentation, salvage of selected architectural elements and the creation of an interpretive display in the station complex, devoted to the history of Stamford rail transportation will constitute mitigation of this adverse impact.

NOTES

- 1 NY, NH&H Railroad, New York Division, Stamford Station Plan, December 1894. File No. 3035, Plate 7H and 30/449.
- 2 "Improvements on the New York, New Haven & Hartford", The Railroad Gazette, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 11, March 17, 1905, pp. 242-246.
- 3 Sanchis, Frank E. American Architecture: Westchester County, New York. North River Press, Inc., Westchester Co., New York, 1977, pp. 477-478.
- 4 NY, NH&H Railroad Stamford Station Plan, 1894, No. 3035, Plate 7H.
- 5 Walter G. Berg, Buildings and Structures of American Railroads. John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1907, pp. 338-359.
- 6 John A. Droege, Passenger Terminals and Trains, McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1916. Reprinted 1969 by Kalmbach Publishing Co., pp. 254 & 271.
- 7 "The Installation of Electric Traction on the New York Terminal Section of the New Haven Railroad", Engineering News, Vol. 58, No. 10, Sept. 5, 1907, p. 240.
- 8 Swan, Herbert S. Plan of a Metropolitan Suburb, Stamford, CT. Stamford, CT: Town Plan Commission 1929, p. 60.
- 9 Middleton, William D. When the Steam Railroads Electrified, Kalmbach Books, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1974, p. 79.
- 10 Droege. op.cit p. 257.
- 11 Swan. op. cit.
- 12 Ibid. p. 62, ca. 1925 photograph of station.
- 13 Martin, Ed. "Stamford Street Railroad", Stamford Street Railway Transportation Bulletin, No. 88.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ed Wadhams, telephone communication, June 9, 1980.

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- Halliday, Robert, personal communication. The Stamford Historical Society, Inc., June 4, 1980.
- Hirschberg, Stephen, personal communication. Renee Kahn Associates. June 4, 1980.
- "Improvements on the New York, New Haven & Hartford", The Railroad Gazette, Vol.XXXVIII, No.11, March 17, 1905, pp.242-246.
- "The Installation of Electric Traction on the New York Terminal Section of the New Haven Railroad", Engineering News, Vol.58, No.10, September 5, 1907, pp.239-247.
- Martin, Ed. "Stamford Street Railroad", Stamford Street Railway Transportation Bulletin, No.88.
- Meeks, Carroll, L.V. The Railroad Station. Yale University Press, New Haven. 1956.
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- New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, New York Division, Stamford Station Plan, December 1894. File No. 3035, Plate 7H and 30/449.
- Sanchis, Frank E. American Architecture: Westchester County, New York. North River Press, Inc., Westchester County, New York, 1977.
- Swan, Herbert S. Plan of a Metropolitan Suburb, Stamford, Connecticut. Town Plan Commission, 1929, pp.60-64.
- Wadhams, Ed., personal communication. June 9, 1980.

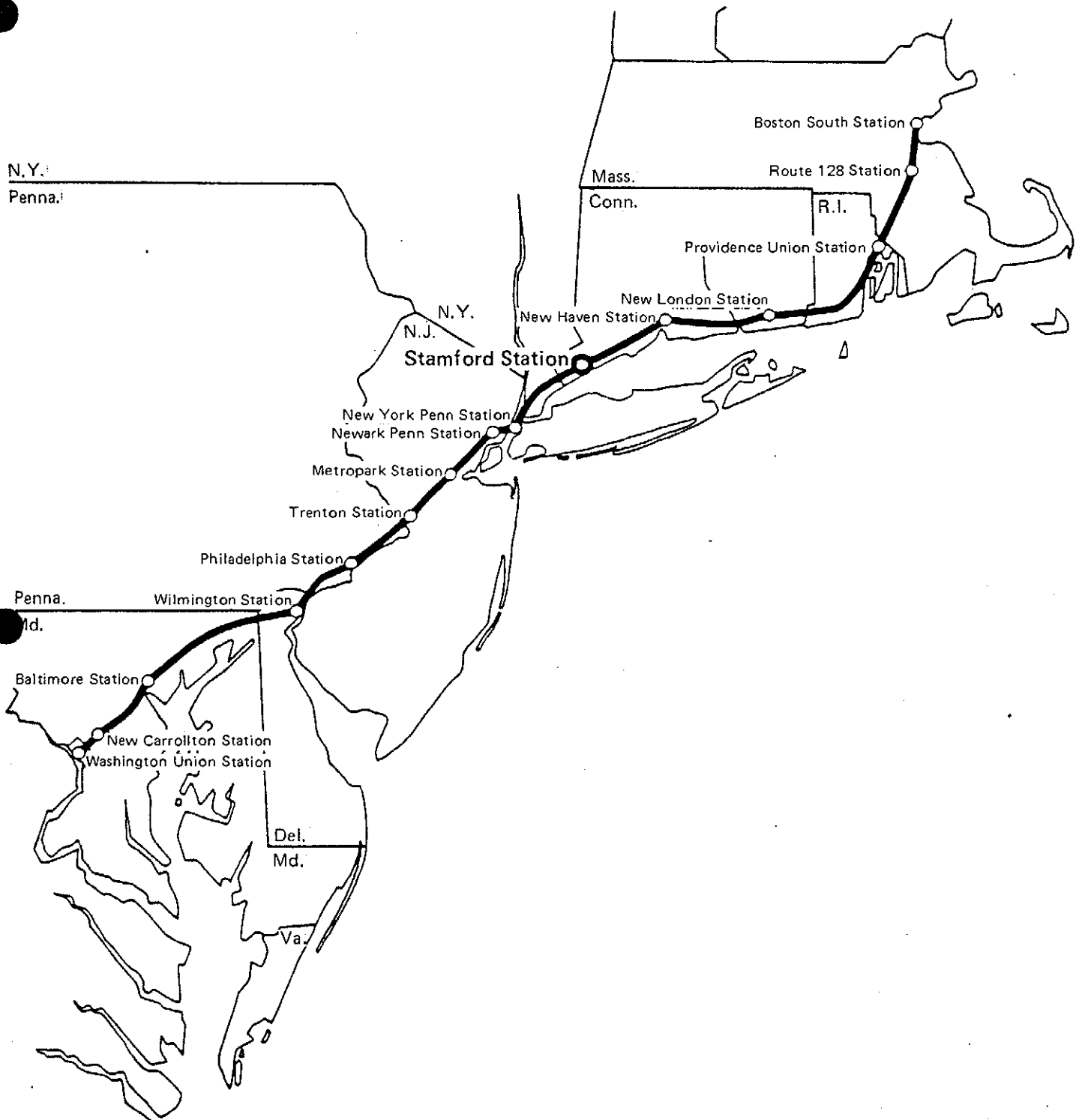
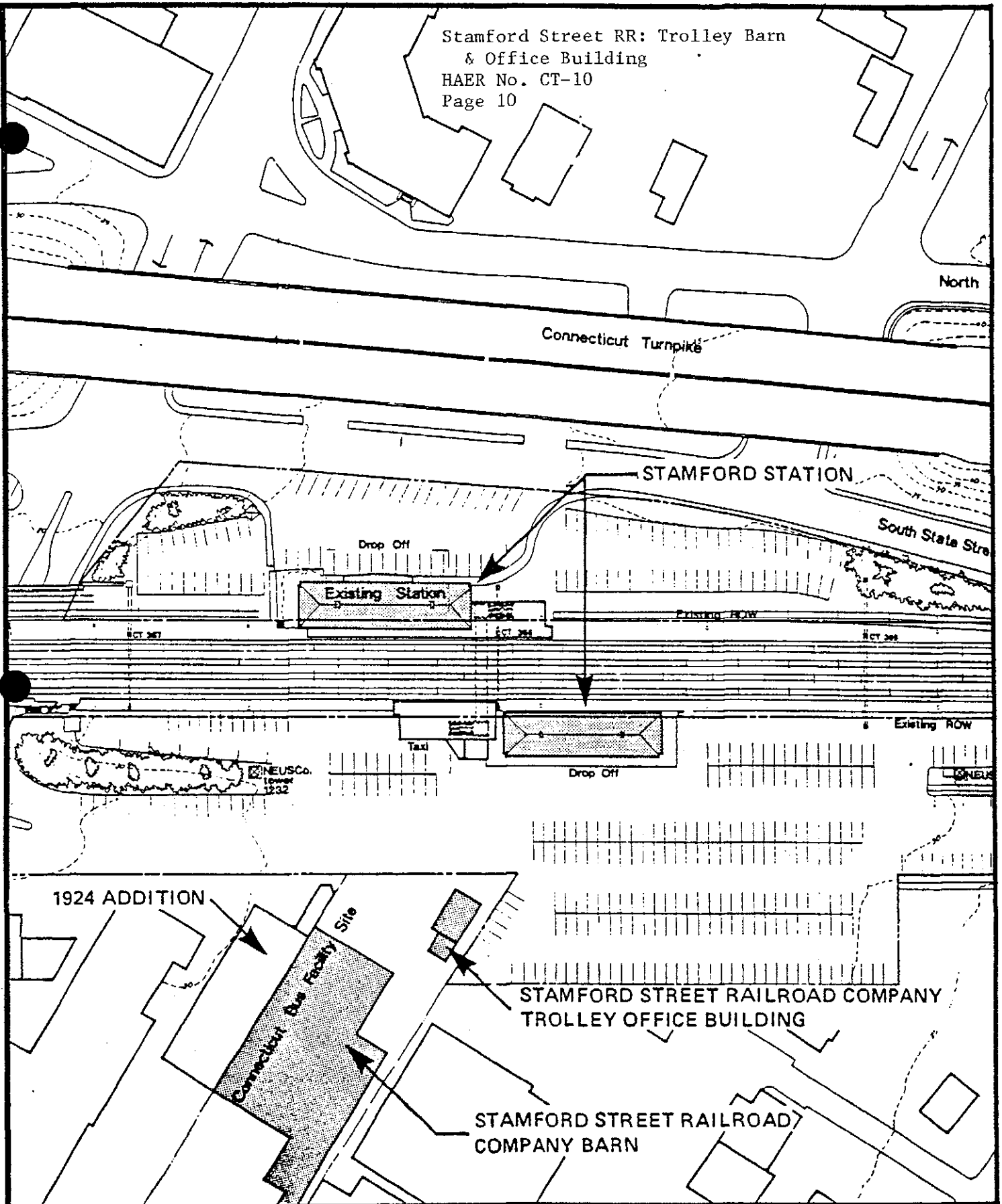


Figure 1
Stamford Station

REGIONAL LOCATION

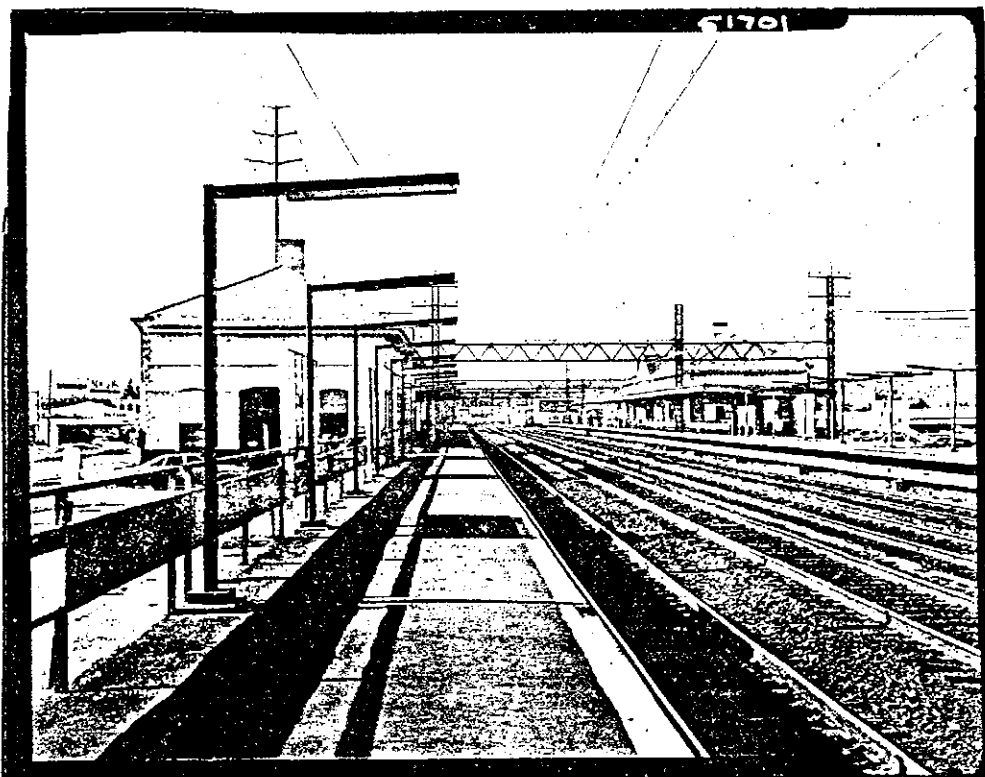




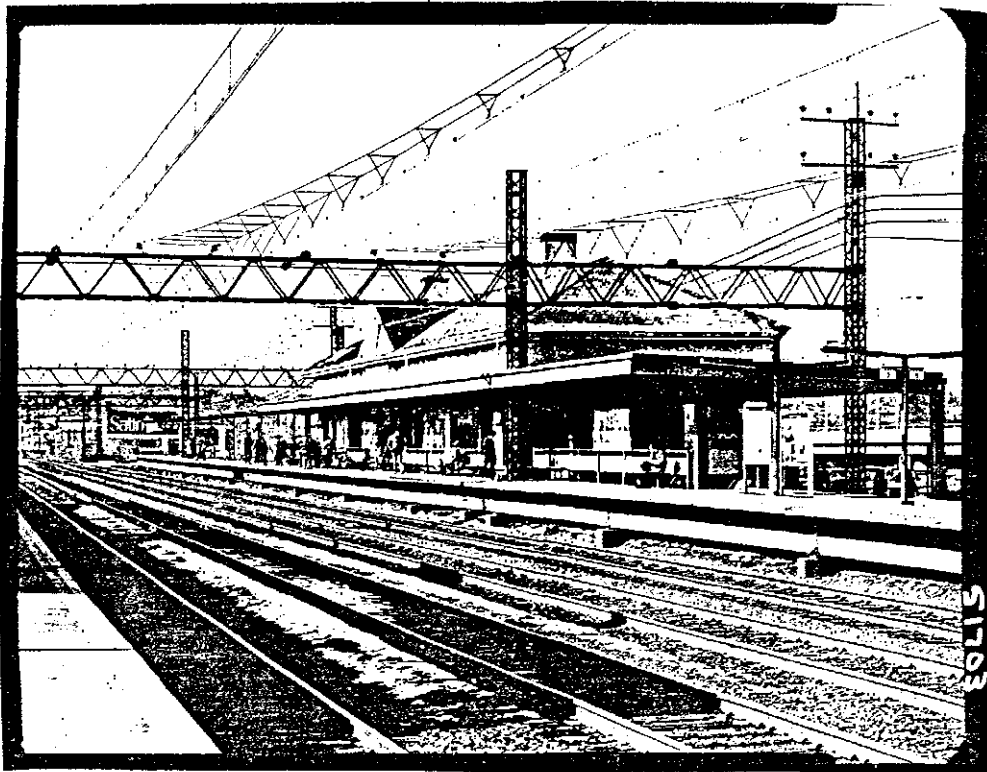
Scale in feet
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Figure 2
Stamford Station

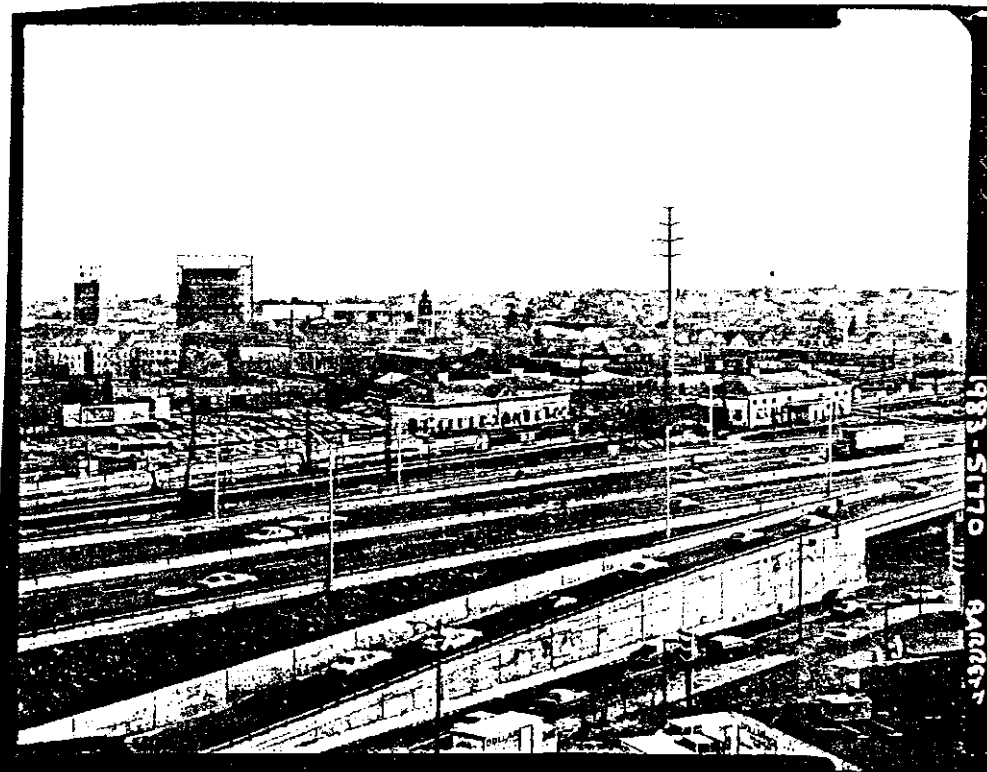
CULTURAL RESOURCES



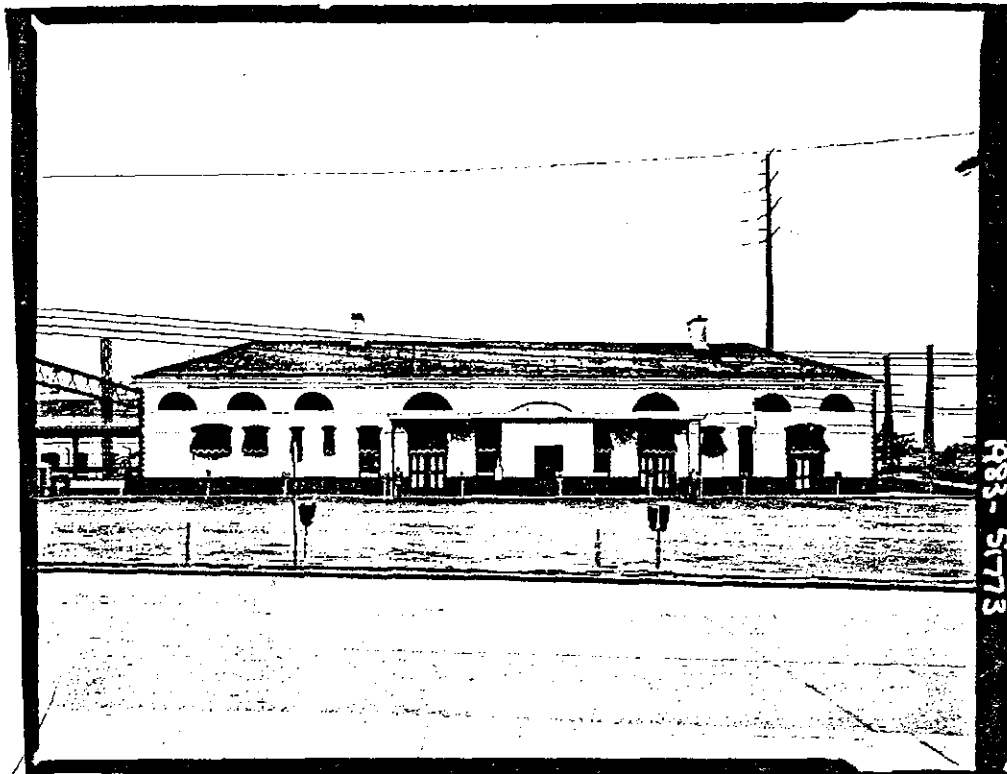
✓ Photo 1
Stamford Station: View of southwest, of twin station
buildings, 4-tracks and overhead catenary.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 2
Stamford Station: View of north (westbound) station platform.
Note triangular catenary hangers.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 3
Stamford Station: View to south, showing twin stations, with
Connecticut Turnpike in foreground.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 4

Stamford Station: View of north (westbound) station from State Street. Note eastbound station to left.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

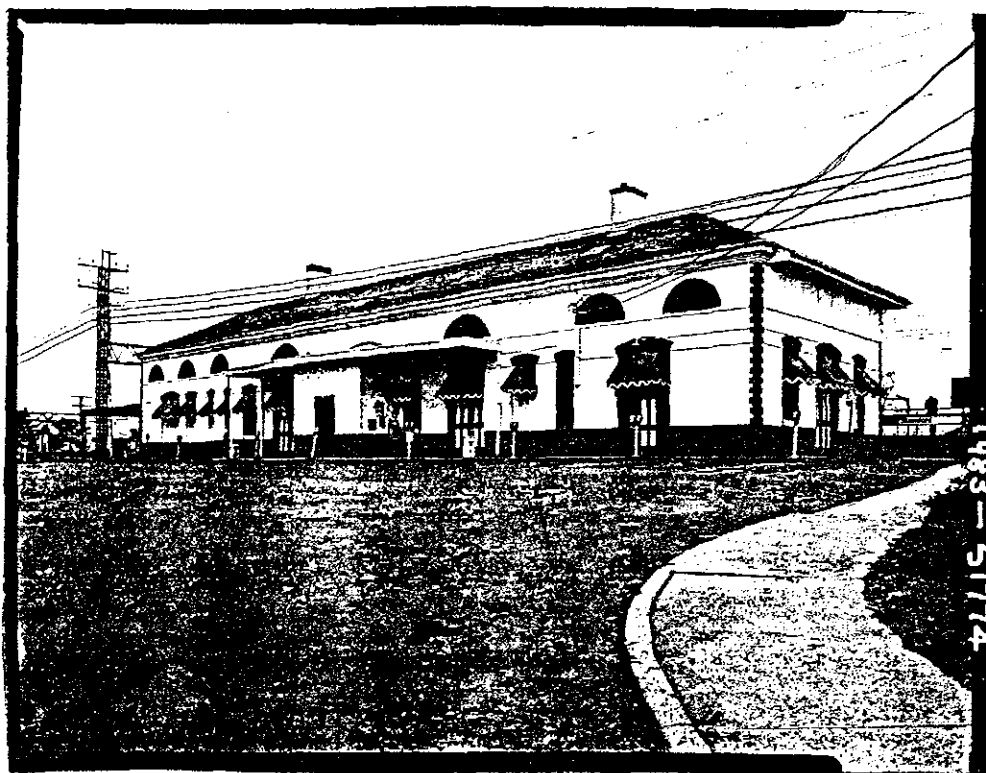


Photo 5

Stamford Station: View of north (westbound) station.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



Photo 6
Stamford Station: North Station interior with doors to tracks
on both sides of ticket kiosk.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 7
Stamford Station: Trackside view of North Station
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

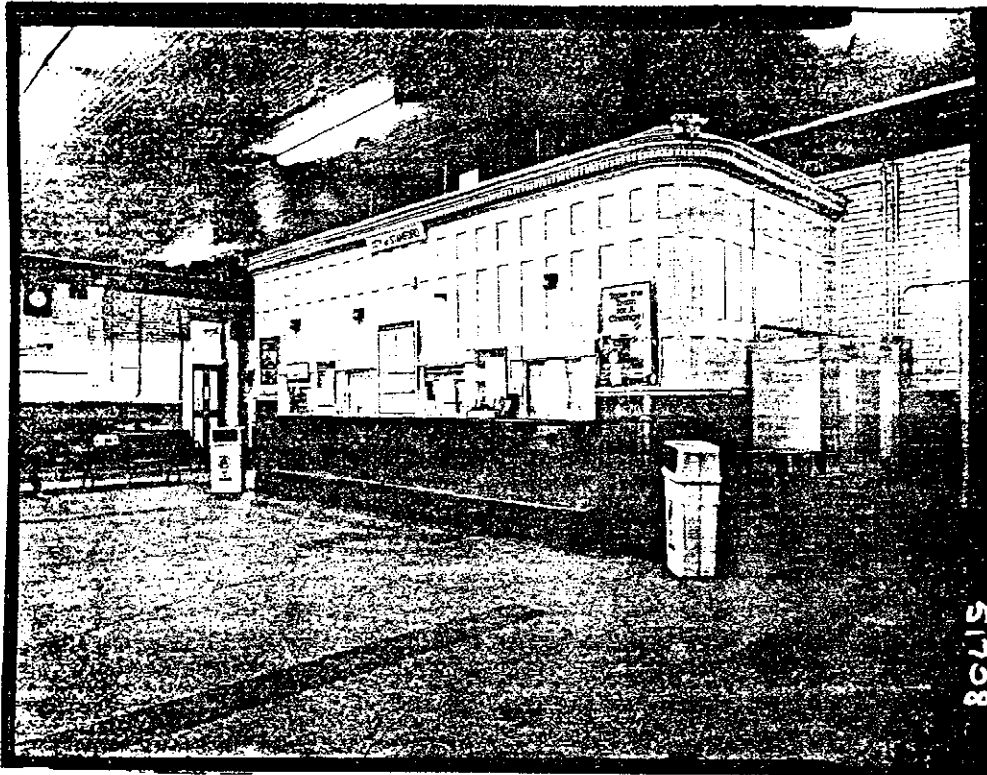
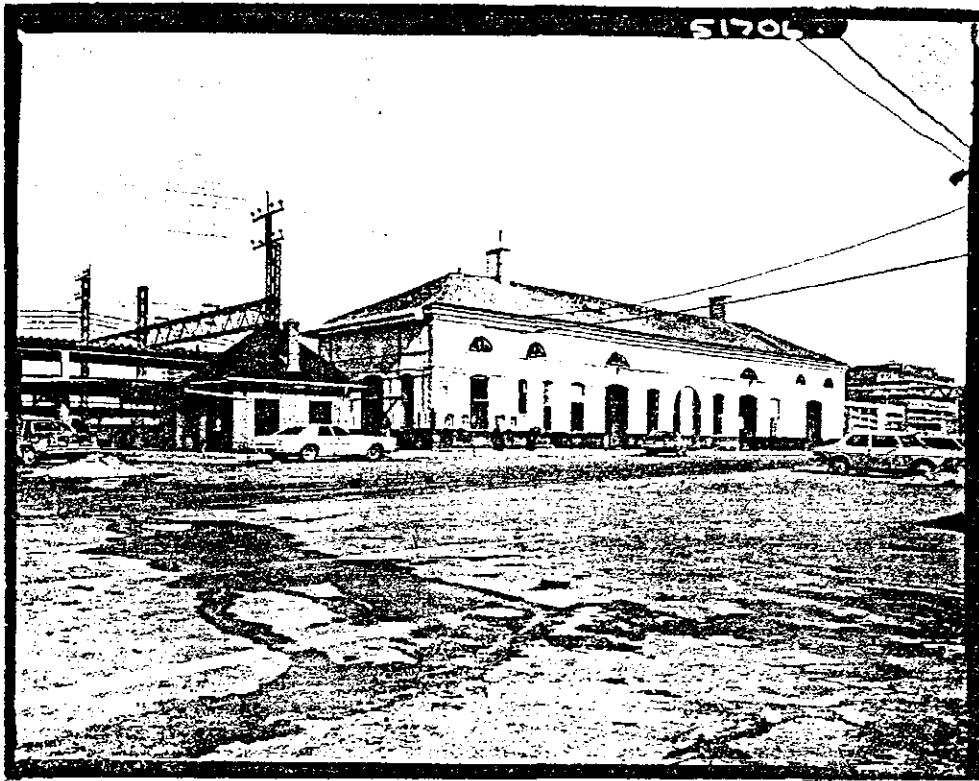
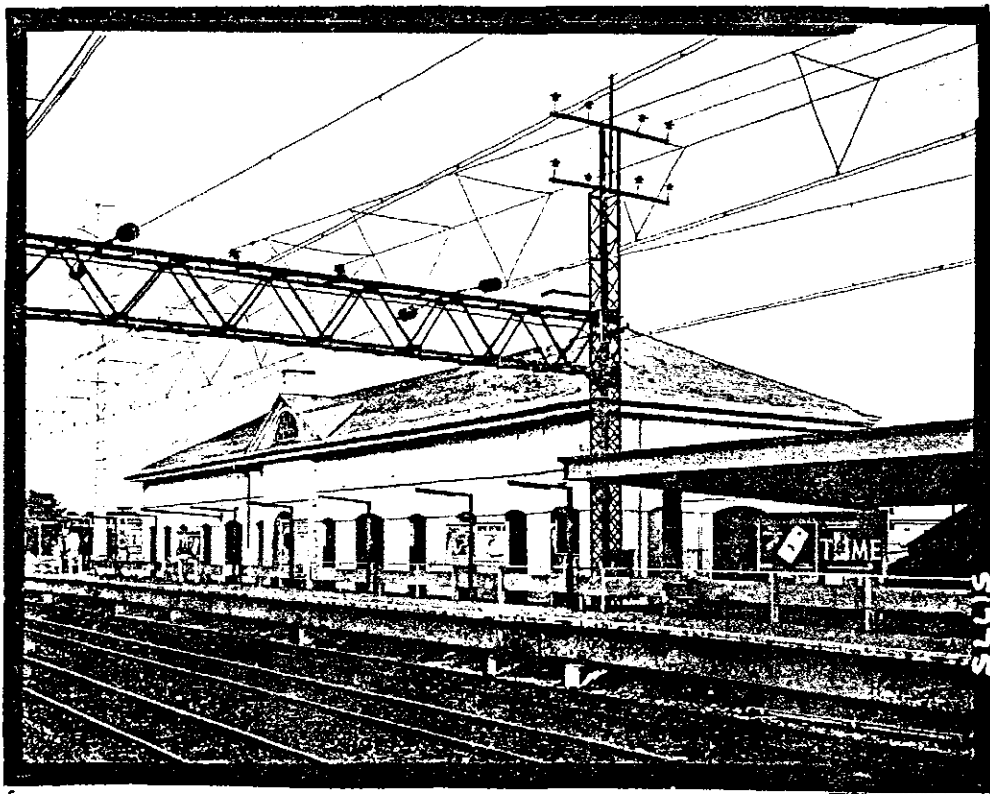


Photo 8
Stamford Station: North Station interior. Note glazed brick
wall surfaces with wainscotting. Ticket office is wood framed.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 9
 Stamford Station: South (eastbound) Station building, exterior view to northwest.
 Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 10
 Stamford Station: South Station from tracks, illustrating high-level platform and catenary portal bridge.
 Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

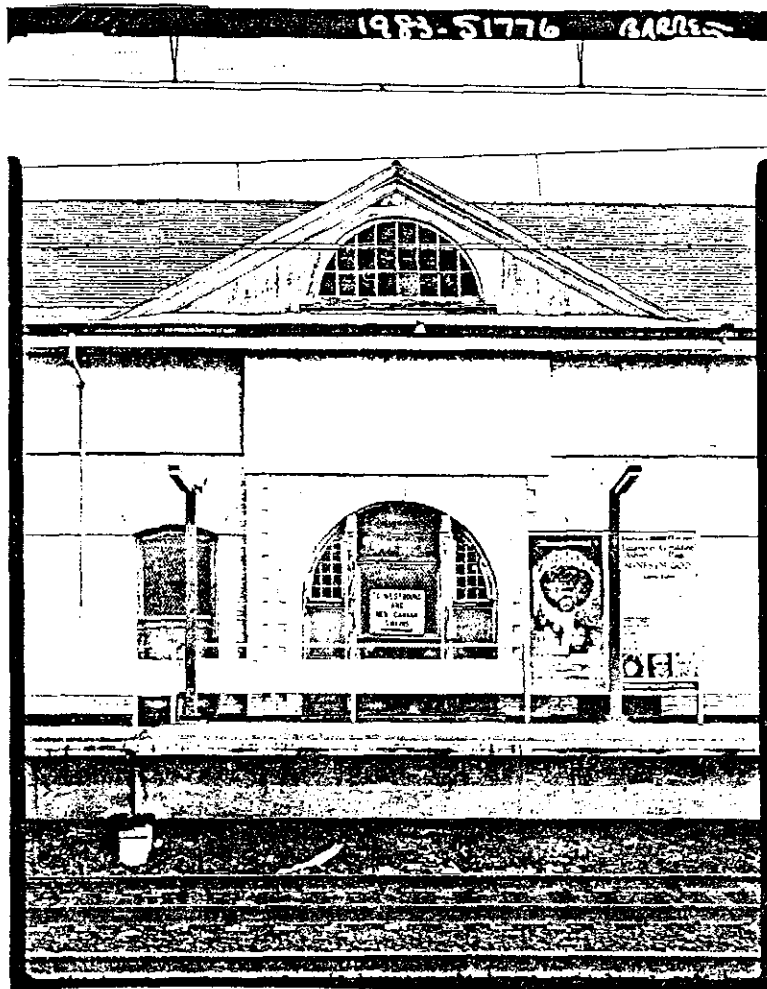
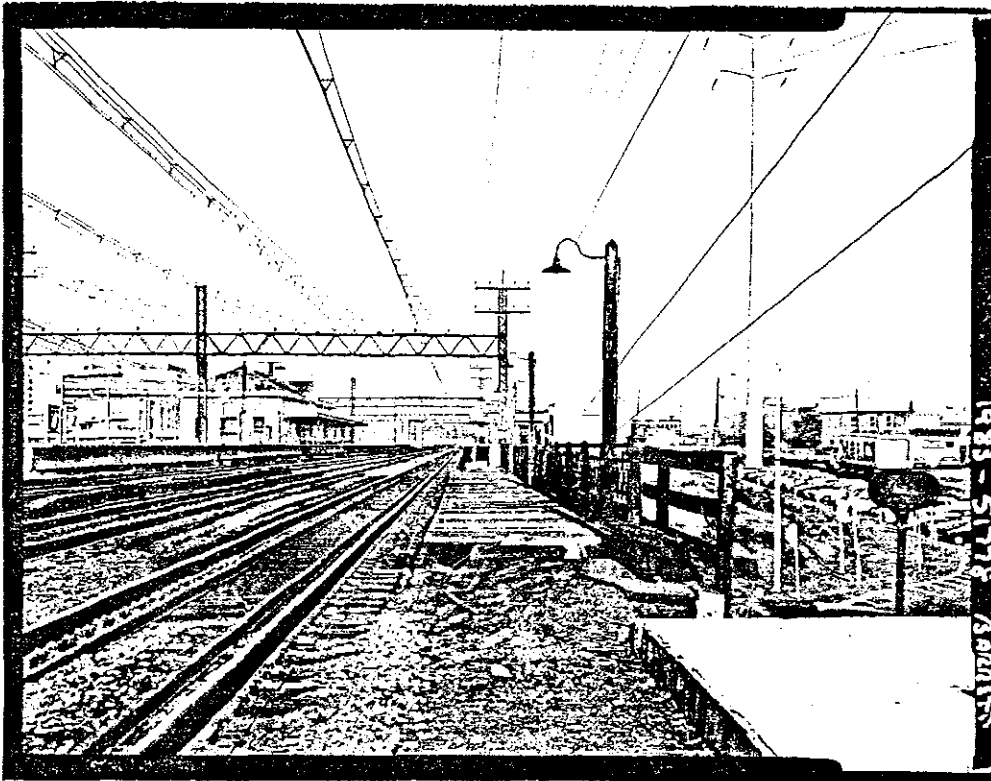


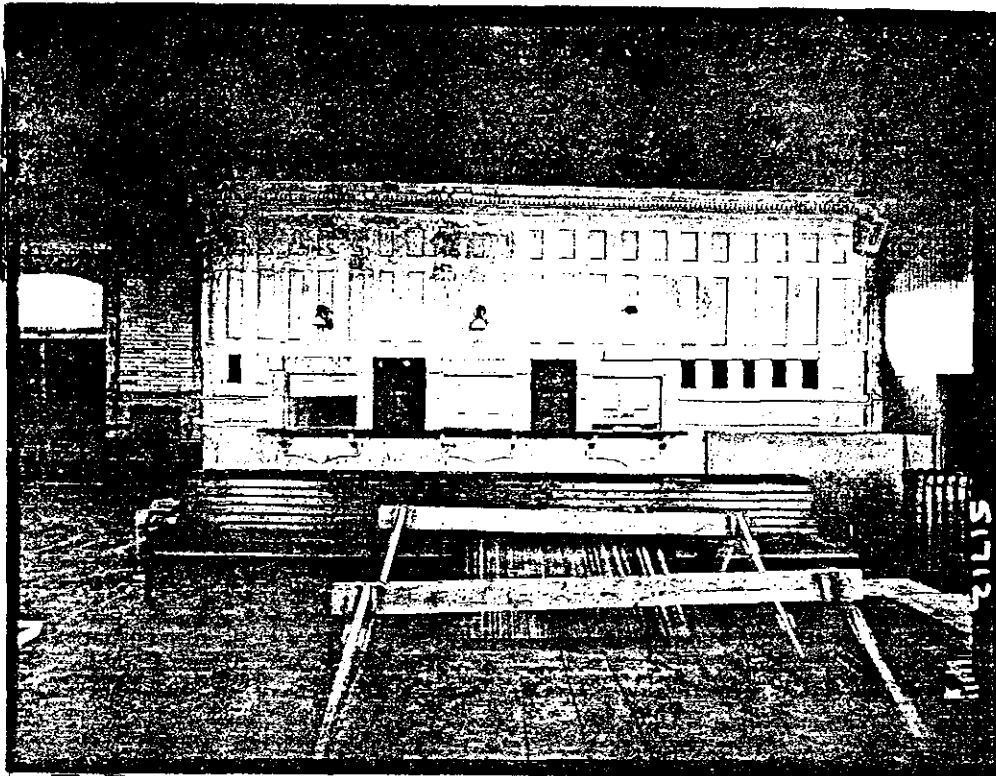
Photo 11
Stamford Station: South (eastbound) Station.
Note terracotta ridge caps, wood cornice and win-
dow frames, and brick detailing.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 12

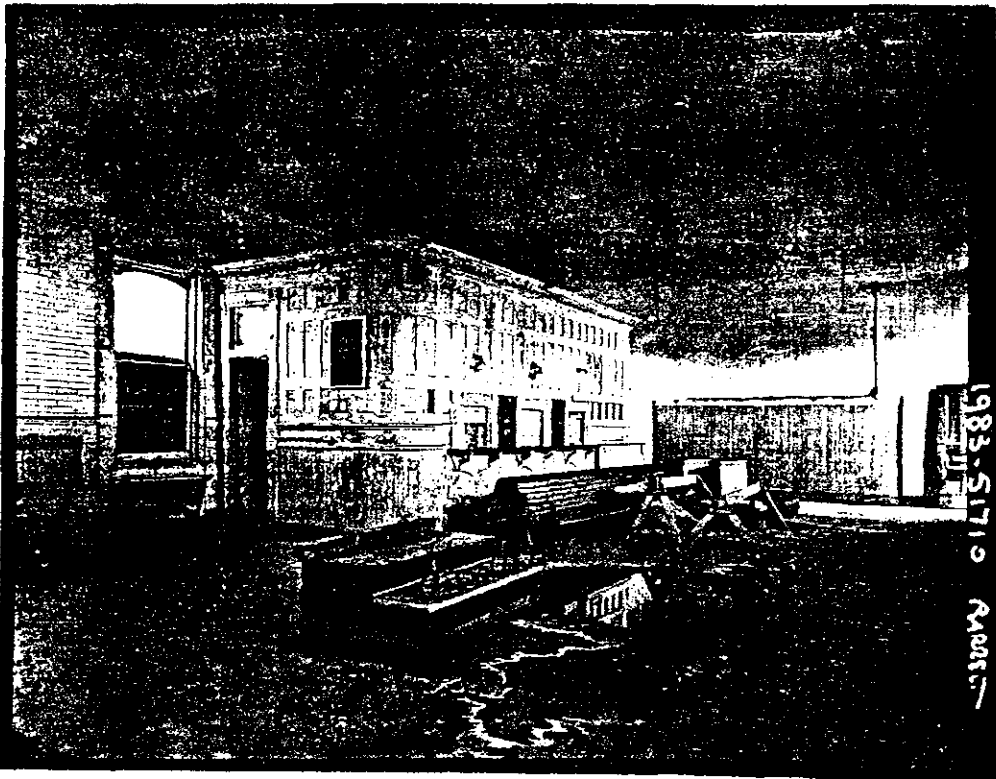
Stamford Station: View to northeast. Note high-level platforms above original wooden ones. Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Office Building on right.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



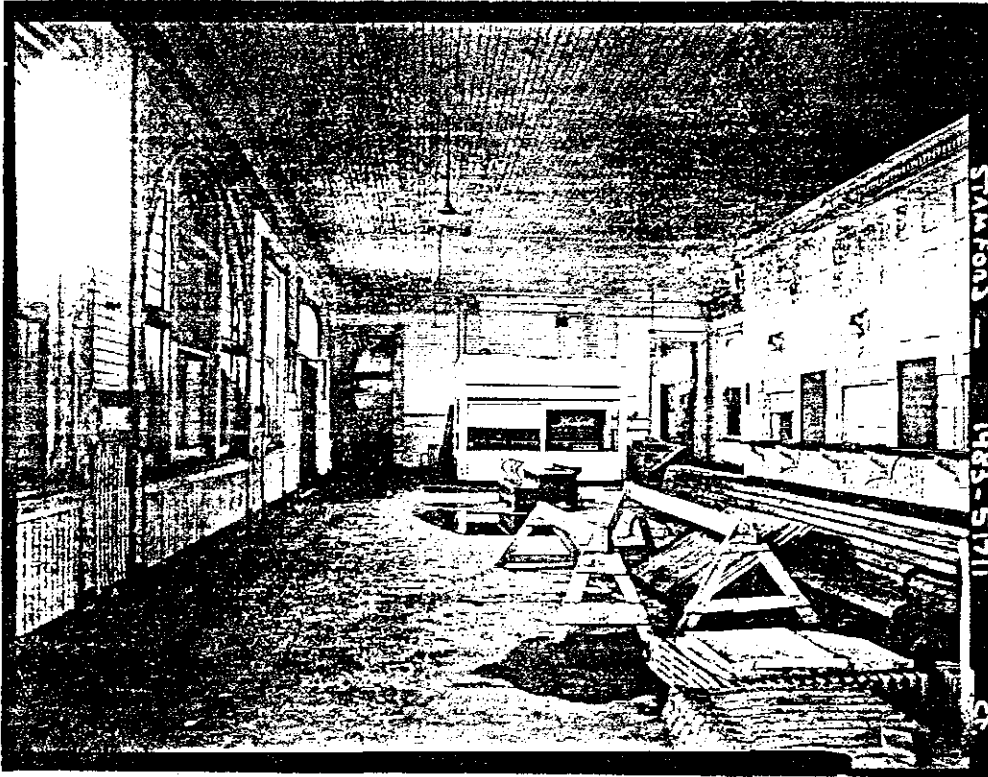
✓ Photo 13
Stamford Station: South (eastbound) Station interior with ticket office kiosk.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 14
Stamford Station: South Station building interior.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



✓ Photo 15
Stamford Station: South Station building. Doors in center
lead to restrooms.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

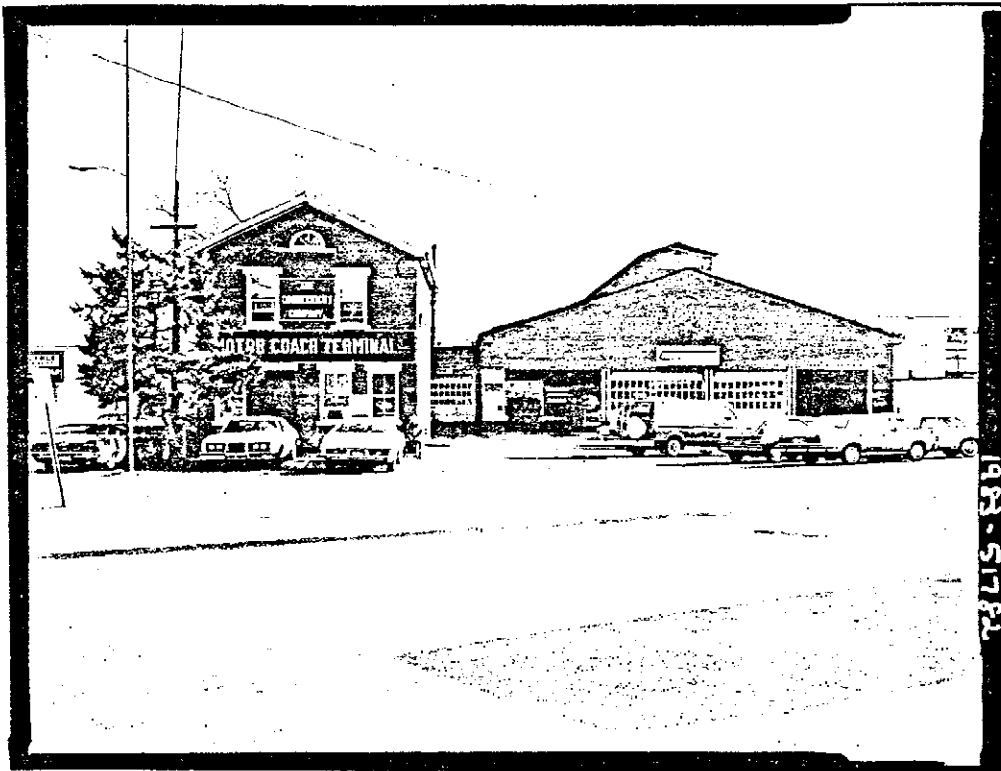


Photo 16
Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Barn and Office
Building: View to south.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

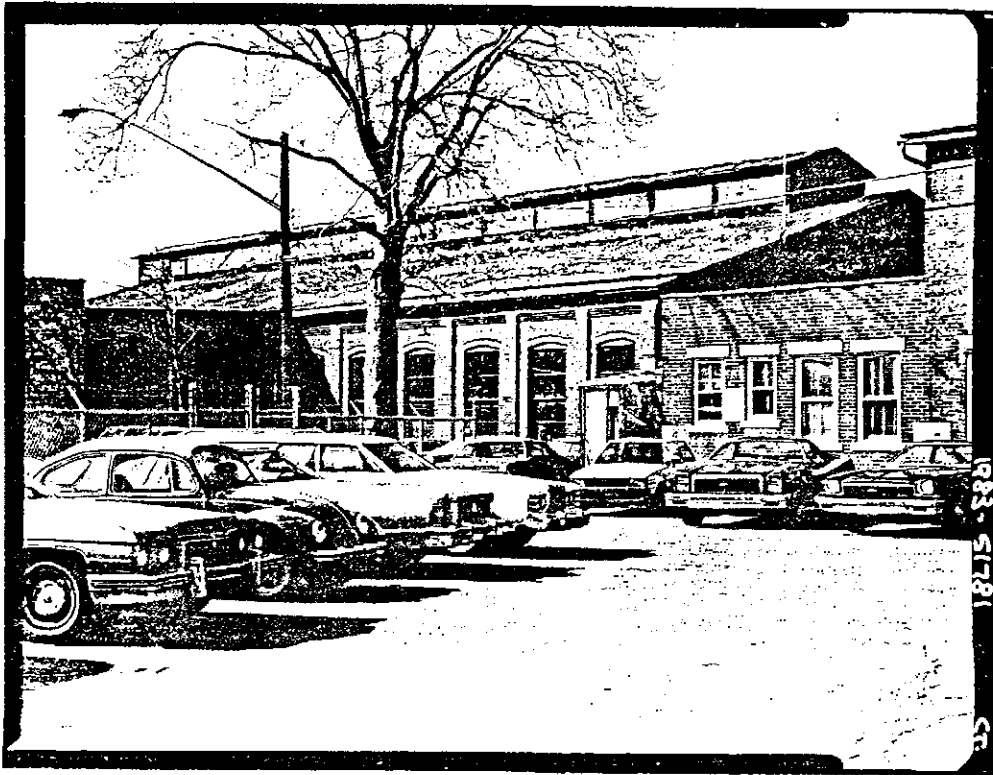


Photo 17
Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Barn: View to west showing original set-back repair shop on left. Rear of Office Building on right.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983



Photo 18
Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Barn: View to south. Note 1924 addition on west.

Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

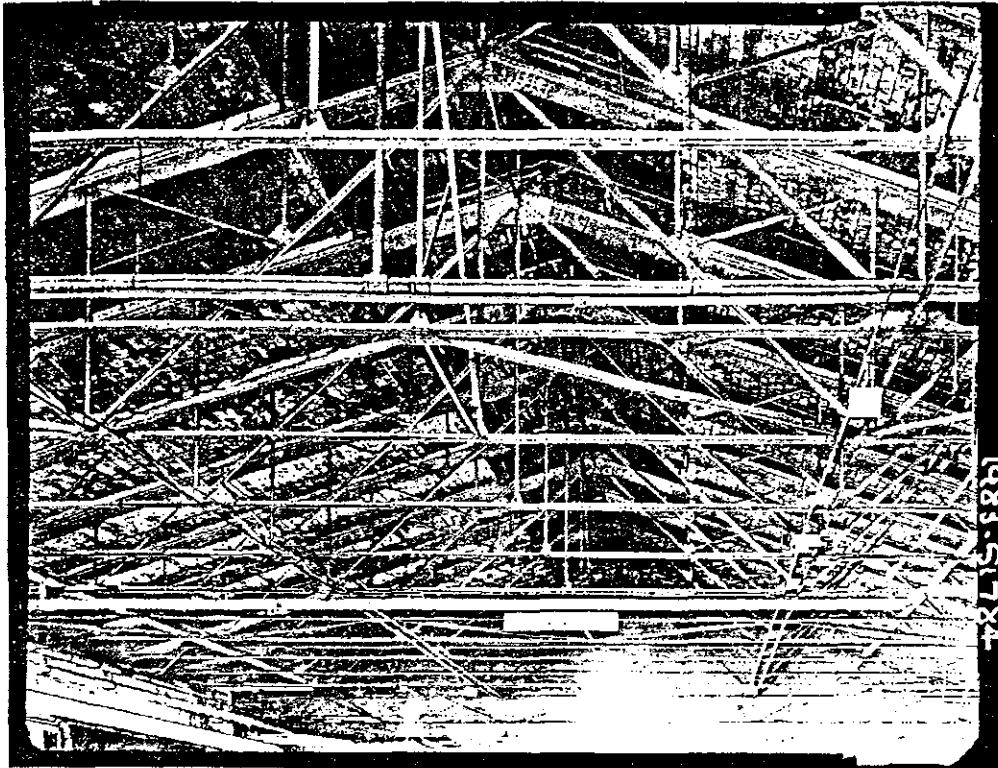


Photo 19
Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Barn: Interior,
illustrating monitor roof and trusswork.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983

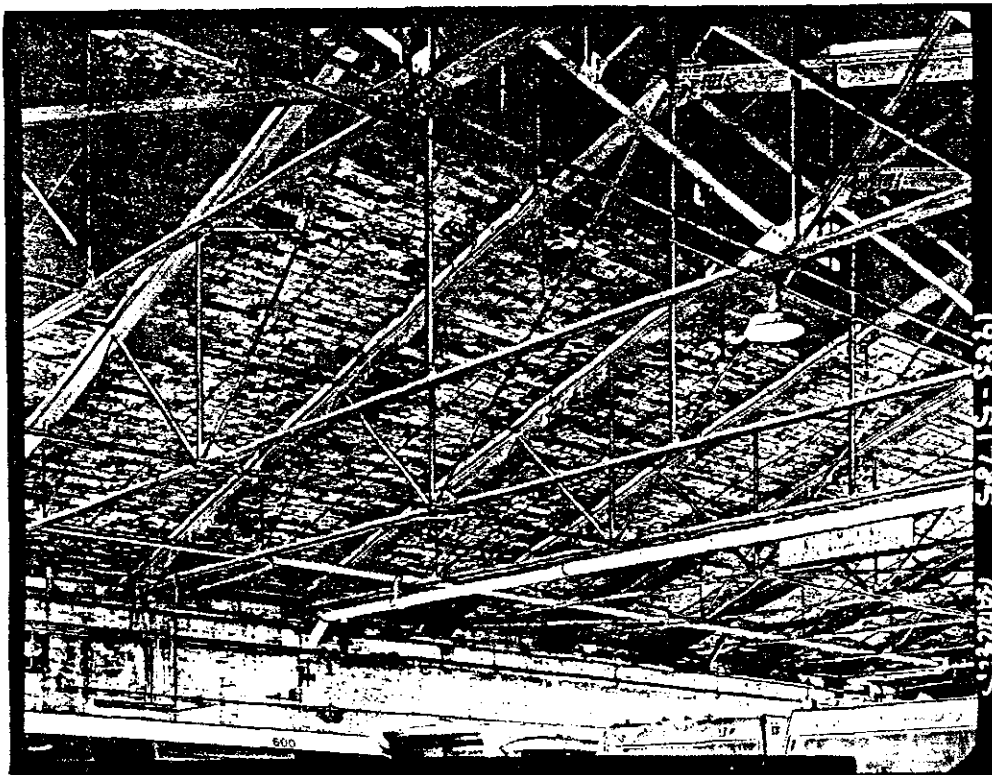


Photo 20
Stamford Street Railroad Company Trolley Barn: Note brick-
work and riveted roof trusses.
Photographer, Wm. Edmund Barrett, 1983